

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 29, 2003

**For More Information Contact**

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## **VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ISSUES FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORIES FOR FOUR LOCATIONS**

(Richmond, Va.)— The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has issued four new fish consumption advisories for rivers and swamps. The advisories are based on recent sampling data and were issued because of contaminants such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and mercury.

“These advisories are being issued due to recent tests conducted by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality that showed levels of PCBs and mercury in exceedance of the health department’s levels of concern,” explained State Health Commissioner, Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H.

The following new advisories have been issued:

- **Roanoke River/Smith Mountain Lake (Counties of Roanoke, Franklin, and Bedford)** -- From the Niagara Dam on Roanoke River downstream approximately 9.5 miles to channel marker R78 on Smith Mountain Lake (two miles down the lake from the Hardy Ford Bridge on County Route 634). No more than one eight-ounce meal per month of flathead catfish should be consumed due to PCB contamination. No sampling data exist on flathead catfish further down in Smith Mountain Lake or up in the Blackwater River arm of the lake. However, it is known that flathead catfish can travel far distances; therefore, it is also advisable that people limit consumption of flathead catfish caught from the entire lake including upstream to the County Route 634 Bridge on the Blackwater River arm of the lake until additional data are collected.
- **Dragon Run Swamp/Piankatank River (Counties of Middlesex, King and Queen, and Gloucester)** -- From State Rt. 603 near Mascot downstream approximately 19 miles to Deep Point Boat Landing (State Rt. 606) on the Piankatank River, across from Piankatank Shores. No more than two eight-ounce meals per month of largemouth bass should be consumed due to mercury contamination.
- **Blackwater River (Counties of Southampton and Isle of Wight and Cities of Franklin and Suffolk)** -- From State Rt. 460 in Zuni downstream approximately 40 miles to the Virginia-North Carolina state line. No more than two eight-ounce meals per month of any largemouth bass or redear sunfish should be consumed due to mercury contamination.
- **Great Dismal Swamp Canal (Chesapeake)** -- From Deep Creek Locks south to the Virginia-North Carolina state line, including the feeder ditch to Lake Drummond. No more than two eight-ounce meals per month of bowfin and chain pickerel should be consumed due to mercury contamination. Fishing in this area is primarily for consumption. Therefore, it is advisable that people limit consumption of all species from these waters until additional data are collected.

(MORE)

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Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children should not eat fish contaminated with PCBs or mercury from these waters.

“Following the advice of these advisories will protect people who eat fish caught in these waters from adverse health effects from mercury and PCB’s,” said Director of the Division of Health Hazards Control, Khizar Wasti, Ph.D.

Because PCBs tend to concentrate in the fatty tissues of the fish, VDH recommends the following precautions to reduce any potential harmful effects from eating fish:

- Eat the smaller, younger fish (within the legal limits). Younger fish are less likely to contain harmful levels of contaminants than larger, older fish.
- Remove the skin, the fat from the belly and top, and internal organs before cooking the fish.
- Bake, broil or grill on an open rack to allow fats to drain away from the meat.
- Discard the fats that cook out of the fish.
- Avoid or reduce the amount of fish drippings or broth that are used to flavor the meal.
- Eat less deep fried fish, since frying seals contaminants into the fatty tissue.

Mercury concentrates in the fish muscle and is not reduced by cleaning or cooking.

The Virginia Department of Health issues fish advisories based on the evaluation of fish tissue sample results provided by the state's Department of Environmental Quality. For more information on current fish advisories in Virginia, log onto the Virginia Department of Health’s Web site on fishing advisories at [www.vdh.state.va.us/HHControl/fishing\\_advisories.htm](http://www.vdh.state.va.us/HHControl/fishing_advisories.htm)

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